

**House Report 106-635 - LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS
BILL, 2001**

DISSENTING VIEWS OF HON. DAVID R. OBEY

I find this bill deeply disturbing. I simply have to scratch my head and ask what are we trying to do in this institution when we report out a bill like this.

We have sworn to uphold the Constitution and we have, as members of Congress, a special responsibility with respect to Article I. There have been periods in our history when the Congress has been too weak to exercise the restraint over the Executive that was needed, and that our forefathers anticipated. Everything I observe lately indicates that we are once again headed in that direction. This bill would severely damage the basic tools we need to interact with the other branches of government that we have sworn to oversee. Enactment of Legislative Branch funding at these levels will make us even more than captive of the Executive Branch in terms of having any independent understanding how effectively they are using the resources we provide them with to protect the public interest.

With respect to the Congressional Research Service (CRS) the bill would cut 114 jobs and severely damage the quality of information that organization provides to all of our offices, and through our offices, to the American people. That funding level is even more devastating to the effectiveness of CRS because of the large number of retirements expected to occur in the next several years. We are dramatically reducing the number of junior employees within CRS who are being trained to replace the 'baby boomer' generation of employees that now hold the senior positions and will soon be gone. Much of the expertise and timeliness we now enjoy in the provision of information will be lost, if they do not have younger workers to train before the senior analysts retire. Future Congresses will be greatly diminished by this, and this would be a horrible bill if that were its only flaw. Unfortunately, it is not.

The bill will have the same kind of harmful effect with respect to our own offices. Member's Representational Accounts are funded at \$406 million in FY 2000. That amount is insufficient and about \$4 million will have to be added through reprogramming to cover the full costs of Members office expenses. The request for FY 2001 was \$423 million, which is enough to provide our staffs with a cost of living adjustment, which I think they deserve. It is no secret that the people who answer constituent mail or who try to get a fair break for our constituents from the Social Security Administration or who keep Members informed about what is going on in Committee or on the floor are getting younger and younger. It is even harder to keep competent staff in a strong labor market, and when House members cannot compete with the Senate. The Senate is attracting House staff at an unprecedented rate. The Senate pays on average 24% or \$27,000 more for Legislative Assistants than

the House. The Senate pays almost 40% or \$36,000 more for Legislative Directors. This bill will not only eliminate the possibility of a cost of living adjustment for House members staff, it will cut office budgets by 2.5% below this year's level--which means you have to either cut salaries or fire people.

It doesn't end there. This bill cuts 707 people from the General Accounting Office. That comes from a party that swore only two months ago that they were going to live within a tight budget by eliminating 'waste, fraud and abuse.' How are they going to find it--by taking a cab ride down Pennsylvania Ave.? This cut deserves some kind of award for legislative hypocrisy, and I would award it, if it were not for the fact that the clear winner of that award is the next item.

Two years ago we had an awful tragedy here at the Capitol. A madman with a gun came through one of the entrances to the Capitol and shot the policeman guarding the entrance in the back of the head while he was helping a visitor with directions. A second policeman just happened to be near the entrance and fired on the assailant. He wounded the man and alerted others to the threat. That gave Detective Gibson who was stationed a few feet down a nearby hall the chance to get his gun out and stop the assailant. Unfortunately Detective Gibson was also killed.

There was an enormous response to these killings both here in the Congress and around the country. There were numerous ceremonies and hundreds of speeches. One member of the Republican leadership stated:

We are here today to honor the fallen officers, but we also have to take this opportunity to salute the quiet courage of all the officers of the Capitol Police who come to work each day without notice, without heralding, without publicity, who get up and put their uniform on, pin their badge on and come into this place and face the threat of immediate death and violence. They are the salt of the earth. They are the reason our democracy can live, and they should be honored and they should be held up for all of our public to see and to notice today and always.

As a result of these killings the Secret Service and others studied the overall security of the Capitol. A report summarizing their recommendations was put together by the consulting firm of Booze Allen & Hamilton. Their primary finding and the one on which they placed the heaviest emphasis was: 'Current Capitol Police force staffing is insufficient to meet today's threat environment.' In conjunction with this recommendation, they insisted that the staffing levels needed to be sufficient to permit two officers to be stationed at each entrance. That means an attacker would have to contend with two officers simultaneously. It also increases the probability that a call for help can be made to alert the rest of the force in the event of an attack. Providing the force with the ability to station two officers at each entrance significantly increases the safety of the officers and of the Capitol.

In the wake of the shootings Congress passed supplemental appropriations providing for greater security and increasing the number of Capitol Police Officers. The funds provided were sufficient to permit the recruitment and hiring of 260 additional officers. To date 230 have been hired and an additional 30 are currently being recruited. For fiscal 2001, the police have requested the hiring of an additional 100 officers.

This bill cuts the police by \$8.2 million below last year and by \$42.1 million below the request. The effect is to not only prevent the hiring the 100 new officers, but to force the firing of 30 officers yet to be recruited, all 230 added to the force since the shootings, and 240 more officers who were on the force at the time of the shooting. The force would be cut from the current level of 1,481 to only slightly more than 1,000.

This is crazy. It is mindless. It makes no sense. Why is Congress doing it? It is because the Republican leadership has ordered the Committee to reach a specific number without respect to policy--part of the price we must pay to make room for the big tax cut that Republican leaders are insisting on. Cutting funding to reach the number is apparently all-important. The policy consequences, no matter how bad, apparently are unimportant.

There is not a single member of the House who should vote for this travesty regardless of what their leadership tells them.

DAVE OBEY.

DISSENTING VIEWS OF HON. STENY H. HOYER

The House should reject this bill for one simple reason: it fails to provide the resources the House and other Legislative-branch agencies need to function effectively next year for the American people.

This failure is not Chairman Taylor's fault; he did the best he could with the meager resources allocated to him. The proximate cause of the failure is the adoption last month of a budget resolution that even most Republican Members know is unrealistic. As a result of their determination to shower huge tax cuts on the wealthiest Americans, Republican leaders are now driving the appropriations process down the same road they have traveled for several years, toward a needless confrontation with the President, followed by enactment of a mammoth, catch-all spending bill thrown together in a pell-mell rush to adjourn. After more than five years in the majority, Republicans have learned nothing. For the Legislative branch, this year the consequences are harsh--at least 1,729 positions lost--and downright dangerous.

It is Congress' duty to provide for the security of the thousands of Americans who visit their Capitol every year and work here every day. This bill not only

fails to fund the 100 additional officers the Capitol Police Board requested to assure visitors and staff are protected, it actually cuts the Capitol Police by 11.6% and chops 438 officers from the force.

This is unacceptable. This bill rolls security back to where it stood before a gunman barged through a Capitol door and shot two officers to death on July 24, 1998. It rejects a key recommendation of the 1998 Security Task Force, which warned that '(t)here should be a minimum of two officers at any post to protect against a security breach if one officer is distracted or overtaken.' We must not jeopardize the safety of Americans who work in and visit their Capitol.

There is no money in this bill for fire-safety projects and little for life-safety work in the Capitol complex. I applaud Chairman Taylor for fully funding pending fire-safety projects in the recent supplemental (H.R. 3908), but the Senate majority leader has vowed that measure will not become law. So this bill should provide the money needed to expedite projects to protect visitors and staff from fire.

This bill also unacceptably cuts funds for basic care of the Capitol complex. It cuts funds for restroom cleaning; trash collection and removal; painting, groundskeeping, and other necessary maintenance; and impairs our troubled recycling program. When Americans visit the Capitol, they want to be proud of its physical condition. According to the Architect, this bill will cut at least 112 positions from his staff, many of them custodians and laborers who perform these essential functions.

This measure takes a meat-axe to the Government Printing Office, lopping off a breathtaking 25% of its funding and at least 400 employees. The bill effectively ends the Federal Depository Library Program by ceasing distribution of paper and other tangible products to the 1,337 depository libraries across this country. It will thus leave the tens of thousands of Americans who use those libraries without the bulk of the Federal information that is now made available, including many congressional documents. All Americans should wonder what their Congress suddenly doesn't want them to know.

Moreover, this bill cuts back so far on congressional printing funds as to threaten seriously GPO's ongoing ability to support us in our legislative duties. It prevents the publication next year of whole classes of documents that our constituents and we use every day, including the United States Code, the Congressional Directory, House and Senate telephone directories, the 'pocket' Constitution, 'Our American Government,' 'Our Flag,' and others.

Similarly, this bill cuts 114 staff at the Congressional Research Service, whose non-partisan research benefits thousands of Americans. It cuts 31 employees from the Congressional Budget Office, a non-partisan entity

created to give Congress a source of budgetary information independent of the Executive branch. It foolishly cuts 707 staff, a whopping 25% of the workforce, from the General Accounting Office, which in 1999 issued recommendations saving \$57 for every dollar spent. GAO helps us conduct critical oversight of programs, and I am astounded by the committee's willingness to cripple the agency that helps us to ferret out waste, fraud and abuse throughout this government.

It is easy to think of the Legislative appropriations bill as simply providing for Congress' own internal needs. In reality it is much more. The Congress and other Legislative-branch agencies serve the people directly in such areas as law enforcement and public safety, preservation and maintenance of irreplaceable public assets like the Capitol, the dissemination of government information, and oversight of programs that spend billions in public funds, to name a few. The committee bill needlessly shortchanges all these accounts and more. The House should reject it.

STENY H. HOYER.